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The Biggest Business in the World - Homemaking

Is it?

The very day I decided on this subject on going home in the evening, I found News Week in my mailbox and to my surprise there on the cover page was the picture of Harlow Curtice, President of General Motors, with the caption, "Biggest Business in the World." The publisher declared no nation is crazier about cars than is the United States and we are told that around 80% of the consumer credit today is for automobiles. Still, I claim that homemaking is the biggest business of all times. When we realize that with present population growth that every day of the year, 11,000 new babies are born in American homes, crying for food, clothing, shelter and education - for jobs, and finally to build homes of their own, then do we realize that it is the biggest and most important business in the world.

But have we really thought of it in that light? How many of you remember the old saying when a young couple got married and started on their honeymoon, "Well, they'll live a few weeks on love and pickles." Too, the idea was that folks just fell in love. Maybe that was a pretty safe assumption in Grandmother's day when the horse and buggy determined the extent of your community and social life. Granted,

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Talk to be given by Mrs. Lottie M. Randolph, Assistant to the Administrator, Farmers Home Administration, at Plant to Prosper Meeting, Memphis, Tennessee, December 16, 1955.



of course, that love and affection is the foundation on which successful homes are built, we all know out of experience that if there is nothing more than love and pickles to live on it won't be long until John and Mary have their knees under Dad's and Mother's table.

I can well remember, too, when my dear old grandmother used to say to my sister and me, "Girls, you must have good blood in your veins." Grandmother knew very little about the complex social problems confronting parents and youth today, but she did believe that a good, moral, family background was important to good citizenship. Contrast Grandmother's day to the present, when a high school girl of sixteen comes home and says to Mother and Dad, "I wish there was one evening in the week when we could all stay at home together." In this case it was basketball practice, school band and church orchestra practice, 4-H Club, Grange and Farm Bureau meetings, with very little time for picture shows or other amusement - all worthy and worthwhile but not enough nights in the week or enough cars to transport the family to and from all the activities.

Perhaps we might well stop here and define what we mean by the term "home." Webster says, "Home is a place of abode." The modern paragrapher says, "It is just a place to go to get ready to go someplace else." But the definition I like best is given us by Lita Bane, nationally known home economist and writer, who, like Webster,



says, "Home is a place of abode," but adds, "for a group of people bound together by affection, each contributing according to his ability and receiving according to his power."

Farming and Farm Homemaking in an Ever-changing World

Just as the successful farm operation today calls for adequate land resources, equipment and technical know-how, the farm home calls for business-like management and a standard of living in keeping with the ever-changing world about us. Frankly, I got a good chuckle out of a comment Phil Brown, our information resource man in Farmers Home Administration, made when we were discussing the many decisions the homemaker must make today in comparison with our mothers and grandmothers. Phil said, "Mother had it easy!" We agreed there are a thousand and one decisions these women have to make that their mothers and grandmothers never faced. The markets are full of household equipment, furnishings and labor-saving devices. Farm women want these things and they need them. But they cannot be obtained just for the asking. They must decide whether to produce food and clothing at home and what to pay for outside the home.

In Arkansas, where normal home garden production is estimated to be worth  $\$24\frac{1}{2}$  million, some 142,000 of the State's 182,000 families reported gardens last year, 1954, in spite of severe midsummer drought, saving an estimated \$500 to \$700 on family living expenses.

Farm wives must plan with their husbands how best to obtain the items needed in the home. And this also means that the farm men must consider the household budget when making the farm plans for the year.



Too, they must share in counseling and in companionship with the children for farming is a family affair.

#### Social as Well as Economic and Civic Changes in Rural Living

The numbers of people living on family-type farms and in villages and cities has reversed in proportion as farms have become mechanized and rural people have found work in related industries, thus creating problems in health, education and in social and civic life.

Science, mechanics and wars have pushed open the windows and doors of today's homemaker to the whole world. Yes, through two world wars, when husbands, fathers, sons and daughters were called to the armed services, women of America went into the field, the factory, industries and the professions, wherever a job needed doing, to protect the place we call home.

It may be significant to note that today the direct influence of women is felt by the presence of 17 of their sex as members of the Congress of the United States, a greater number than ever before in the history of our nation. There are also 304 women serving as members of the 1955 State legislatures.

A newspaper editor humorously states that like an average American family, in one way, women handle much of the money of the United States. Mrs. Iva Baker Priest, a true homemaker, is United States Treasurer today and was preceded by Mrs. Georgia Neese Clark, of Richland, Kansas, the first woman to be Uncle Sam's purse-string custodian. It is a well conceded fact that women manage and spend at least 85% of the consumer's dollar.



Frances Scudder, Director of Home Economics, Federal Extension Service, speaking at the National Home Demonstration meeting, used as her subject, "Boundless Horizons." Miss Scudder pointed up that besides the need for teaching beginning homemakers how to do the usual tasks better, most homemakers and families need aid in learning the principles of better management - how to analyze their needs and how to meet them. Women must learn how to make alternate choices.

Today's homemakers are especially interested in foods and nutrition, clothing, housing, home furnishings, household equipment, home management, health and safety, child care and development, family relationships, family economics, good business practices, marketing and consumer buying, and public affairs. Do you wonder that Phil Brown said, "Mother had it easy!"

It is encouraging to note that five million farm women of the United States represented in the National Home Council meeting this year took as their guiding principle, "Today's Home Builds Tomorrow's World." Reported in National Notes, bulletin of the National Home Demonstration Council, Arkansas' women took as their theme, "Spotlight on the Home," and Mississippi's councils cooperated in health and safety programs. The picture of Mississippi's farm women's council in National Notes presents a fine group of women leaders with Mrs. C. W. Eudy, of Cleveland, President. Florida women, in the same bulletin, reported using the theme, "Yesterday's Dreams, Today's Actions, Tomorrow's Accomplishments."

I would like to bring you the thinking of a man prominent in the affairs of our nation, as he addressed the Farm Women's Council meeting



in Chicago, August 23. Mr. Jennings Randolph, former Congressman from West Virginia and now vice-chairman of Capital Airlines, said, "The voice of the farm women of America is being heard. Individually and collectively, they have organized themselves into groups to promote common good. They are keen to discern the sedatives of expediency. They recognize the truth. They are giving responsible thought to the perplexing problems of the present era. They study and exchange views that they may be better informed. They realize that the strongest link in our chain of Democracy is the family and the home in which the family shares its common disappointments and its common hopes ... and as long as the family-home structure of our country is preserved and strengthened, our national heritage and our national ideals will be sound and well-protected."

We marvel every day at the accomplishments of our farm youth when we read or listen to the achievements of 4-H clubs and vocational agriculture. Mississippi can be justly proud of Lamar Ratliff (story in November issue of Farm Journal), of Prentiss County, who last year grew 304 bushels of corn to the acre. Likewise, Tennessee of Joe Moore chosen Star Farmer this year by Future Farmers of America. (Time magazine, October 24 issue, carried Joe Moore's picture on cover page with a four-page story inside)

#### Farmers Home Administration Credit

Farmers Home Administration, the agency I represent, is vitally interested in helping the young farm families in need of credit to become soundly established on successful family-type farms.



Personally, I count it a privilege to serve Agriculture in a Government agency delegated by Congress to administer a sound credit program recognizing the importance of the family unit - the cornerstone on which representative government was built and the principle on which we believe the American Way of Life will rise or fall.

Farmers Home Administration makes loans to family-type farmers and on the basis that a farm and home plan to be successful must be developed jointly by the husband and wife. We mean by a successful operation that the farm unit must have sufficient land of good enough quality, with ample water, the necessary amount of labor-saving equipment, and adequate productive livestock. It follows that only when the farm and home are run in a business-like manner can the basic improvements like forced running water, refrigeration, electricity and other essential modern living services be provided.

Changes in the insured mortgage loans and extension of soil and water loans by the last session of Congress is making it possible for us to extend credit on a much broader scale. Through the insured loan program, more than 300 private lenders made \$47,000,000 available for development and purchase of farms and the construction and improvement of farm homes last year. Soil and water loans in the few months since they were available have totaled \$20,000,000. The pay-off record of borrowers as of June this year was 93% of the amount due on production loans and 99% on farm ownership loans. Adequate planning with the family on the basis of minimum resource requirements, along with usable farm and home records are important factors in this report, especially with the



present cost-price relationship. Our field officials report 85% of our families keeping usable farm and home records.

Coordinating Services Within Government Agencies

In line with the present business look in the U. S. Department of Agriculture and in an effort to avoid waste and overlapping of services, Mr. R. B. McLeaish and Mr. Clarence Ferguson, Administrators of Farmers Home Administration and Federal Extension Service, in February, 1954, signed a policy statement coordinating services on family living needs of Farmers Home Administration borrowers in those two agencies. Coordinating agreements have likewise been established with Soil Conservation and other agencies.

County Supervisors of the Farmers Home Administration are responsible for the individual supervision extended families but now look to Extension workers for technical information and assistance in planning for home improvements. As a result, Farmers Home Administration women are joining Extension women's clubs in increasing numbers and now clubs are being formed to include the young farm homemaker. These women are a source of new leadership for farm women's clubs. Home Demonstration Agents are assisting with individual home needs, such as planning kitchen improvements, money management, food and health problems.

In July last year, I sat in conference in Missouri with a County Supervisor of Farmers Home Administration, a County Home Agent and a County Agricultural Agent. We were discussing the problem of assisting individual farm families when the County Agent said, "Mrs.



Randolph, it is increasingly difficult for me to visit farms at a time when I can be helpful. Through the day the farmer is working with his tractor and farm equipment, at milking time it is the electric milker, and in the evening it is television in the home." Then we all considered carefully whether or not a larger portion of assistance will in the future be given through the medium of radio and television. One of the television stations at Columbia, Missouri, was at that time giving two one-hour periods each week in the evening to strictly farm broadcasts.

It was my privilege to meet with State Director Fatherree on several occasions in the interest of furthering coordinated services with Extension and other agencies on family living problems of our borrowers. Our first visit, in conjunction with the inauguration of Benjamin Franklin Hilbun, President of Mississippi State College, included meeting County Supervisors, Mary Creswell, then State Home Demonstration Agent, Mr. Clay Lyle, Director of Extension Service, and sitting in a meeting of the Agricultural Workers' Coordinating Council. Then, on April 13 of this year, State Director Fatherree and I met with Miss Earle Gaddis, present State Home Demonstration Leader, to review progress and plan further steps in coordinating our services to farm families in Mississippi. Mississippi, with other southern States, has set the example in cooperation to the end that we may retain and improve the standards of living of the family-type farm.

President Eisenhower's concern for the low-income and family-type farmer, as expressed in his message to Congress - now being activated



through the Rural Development Program - points up the importance of improved standards of living for all rural families.

I would like, too, to share with you the acceptance statement of Mrs. Benson, wife of our Secretary of Agriculture, when she received the Homemaker of the Year award in Washington recently. Mrs. Benson said in part, "....The recognition of homemaking is to be commended for it is the highest calling of woman.

"I have endeavored always to dedicate my life to the building of a happy, successful, home and family life built on a solid spiritual foundation. To me my Church, husband, and family have been my first and most important consideration. Their successes, happiness, and worthy achievements we have all shared. We as a family are one and are most closely knit, helping one another and sharing each other's joys, sorrows, and successes.

"I most humbly receive this recognition and pray that we mothers of all the world will be blessed and inspired in rearing our families as God would have us do. We have been given a most sacred trust for we are indeed builders of men."

Roger Babson, the world-known statistician, visiting with the Governor of Brazil a few years ago tells how the Governor said, "Mr. Babson, why is it that the United States of America is so far ahead of South America in home living standards, education, and every phase of community life. You are four hundred years ahead of us." Mr. Babson, a polite man said, "You answer your own question," and then the Governor of Brazil answered, "It must be due to the fact that the men and women who came to South America came in search of gold, while the pioneers of



the United States of America were in search of a place where they might have Freedom - freedom to worship and live according to the dictates of their own conscience."

Despite rapid and great changes with their consequont problems of adjustmont, there is still a great deal of stability left in rural America. And there are some basic values and ideals of the old that are worth preserving, such as noighborliness, family life, local independence, community pride, stewardship of the land, and individual initiative. We need to continue doing things that will help contribute to the preservation of such values.

This Plant to Prosper award program with incontivos for improved farming and home living is without question a big factor in establishing standards for farming, homemaking and community building throughout the Southern States the American Way.

Dr. Seaman A. Knapp, Father of Extension Service, for whom a memorial archway is built connecting the two buildings housing the United States Department of Agriculture, said, "A country home, be it ever so small, with a father and mother of sense and gentle culture, is Nature's univorsity and is more richly endowed for the training of youth than is Yale or Harvard."

